DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 044 PS 030 130

AUTHOR Parker, McCrae A.; Miller, Patti; Donegan, Kevin; Gilliam, Franklin D., Jr.

TITLE The Local Television New Media's Picture of Children.
INSTITUTION Children Now, Oakland, CA.
SPONS AGENCY Ford Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE 2001-10-00
NOTE 41p.; Also supported by Atlantic Philanthropies.
AVAILABLE FROM Children NOW, 1212 Broadway, 5th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612. Tel: 510-763-2444; Fax: 510-763-1974; e-mail: children@childrennow.org. For full text: http://www.childrennow.org.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Blacks; *Child Advocacy; Child Welfare; Childhood Needs; *Children; Consumer Education; Consumer Protection; *Content Analysis; Hispanic Americans; Mass Media Role; *News Media; Programming (Broadcast); Racial Factors; *Television Research; Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Latinos

ABSTRACT

Children Now is an independent children's advocacy group that promotes solutions to problems facing American children, with particular attention to the needs of those who are poor or at risk. The group provides policy expertise and up-to-date information on the status of children. Children Now's Children and the Media Program works to improve the quality of news and entertainment media both for children and about children's issues, paying particular attention to media images of race, class, and gender. The Media Program commissioned this report, recognizing the local news media's vital influence on social and political progress regarding children. The report analyzes how local news broadcasts across the country cover children and children's issues. A month of locally produced evening news programs on the three major networks in six cities--Atlanta, Boston, Des Moines, Los Angeles, New York and Seattle--constitutes the data. Data are analyzed in three sections concerning children in the news: frequency and story style; content; and convergence of race and ethnicity. Findings indicate that children receive scant attention in local news stories, accounting for only 10 percent of all news stories. When children are covered, crime receives the most coverage--almost half of the total, followed by health, lifestyle issues, education, and politics and economics. Few stories focus on public policy issues. Children in these news stories are most likely to be depicted as victims. Youth of color account for slightly more than one third of news stories about children; most of these involve African American children. Latino and African American children are somewhat more likely to be placed in the context of explicit violence. The report recommends greater breadth and balance in news media's coverage of children and children's issues in order to improve children's self images and assist policymakers, community members, and the public making informed decisions for children's well-being. (JPB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 463 044

The Local Television News Media's Picture of Children

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Amy Dominguez-Arms
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CHILDREN NOW

Children Now is a non-partisan independent voice for America's children working to translate the nation's commitment to children and families into action. Children Now's mission is to improve conditions for all children with particular attention to the needs of those who are poorer or at risk. Recognized nationally for its policy expertise and up-to-date information on the status of children, Children Now has a distinguished record of achievement in promoting solutions to problems facing America's children. A hallmark of the organization is the broad partnerships its programs forge with parents, community leaders, lawmakers, business and the media. Children Now is a national organization with special depth in California.

The Children & the Media Program works to improve the quality of news and entertainment media both for children and about children's issues, paying particular attention to media images of race, class and gender. We seek to accomplish our goals through media industry outreach, and prudent research and public policy development.

Cover art provided by The East Bay Institute for Urban Art

The East Bay Institute for Urban Arts was founded in 1993 [illegible] Bay Area youth and adults in Oakland's [illegible] the East Bay and urban communities nationwide. Serving youth in Oakland and other East Bay [illegible] the belief that art education, Urban Arts provides training for youth [illegible] in the disciplines. Completed productions, which include complex video, [illegible] are made available as resources to individuals and groups seeking social change.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Highlights: The Local Television News Media's Picture of Children

Key findings from a national study of six local television news markets across the country.

Frequency and Content of Stories

- While children account for one fourth of the U.S. population, they receive scant attention in local news stories, accounting for only 10% of all news stories.
- When children were covered, crime received the most coverage (45%), followed by health (24%), lifestyle issues (19%), education (9%) and politics and economics (3%).
- Few stories focused on public policy issues, accounting for only 13% of news stories about children.

Crime, Violence and Victimization

- Almost half of all local news stories about children (45%) focused on crime.
- More than eight out of every ten crime stories about children (84%) were related to violent crime, with murder accounting for nearly half of all violent crime stories.
- Children in the news were most likely to be depicted as victims, with more than two thirds of crime stories (69%) featuring children as victims.

Race, Ethnicity and the News

- Youth of color accounted for slightly more than one third of news stories about children (36%), comparable to their overall demographic proportion of the population.
- African American children accounted for more than half of news stories involving children of color. Latino children accounted for almost one third of those stories. Asian Pacific American and Native American children were virtually invisible on local news.
- Latino and African American children were somewhat more likely than other children to be placed in the context of explicit violence. Almost two thirds of crime stories involving Latino youth (62%) focused on murder, attempted murder or manslaughter. Sixty five percent of crime stories involving African American youth focused on murder, weapons and assault.

6

4 7

Introduction

As a primary source of public affairs information for most Americans, the news media have the capability not only to set the public agenda, but also to prime people to think about certain issues in certain ways.[1] According to 2000 census data, only about 36% of American households are raising children. Thus, many Americans depend on the news media to inform them about the current conditions of children. However, an ever-growing body of research demonstrates that the news media routinely paint a distorted view of children. Local television news, in particular, plays a key role since the majority of adults get more of their news through local broadcasts than any other source. On the local news, children are more likely to be depicted in the context of crime and violence than through issues such as health, education, family and community life.

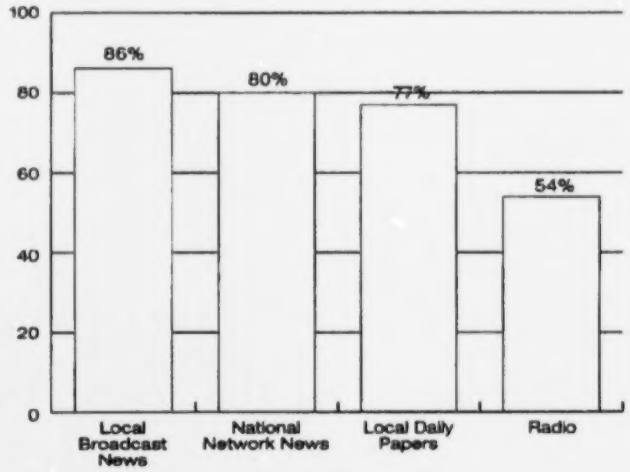
Recognizing the local news media's uniquely vital influence on social and political progress regarding children, Children Now commissioned this report, ***The Local Television News Media's Picture of Children.*** This analysis focuses specifically on how local news broadcasts across the country cover children and is the most comprehensive, nationally representative sample of local news about children and children's issues. A month of locally produced evening news programs on the three major networks in six cities constitutes the data.

The study analyzes the data in three sections:

- **Children in the News: Frequency and Story Style**
- **Children in the News: Content**
- **Children in the News: Convergence of Race and Ethnicity**

Children Now hopes that this study contributes to an active dialogue about the quality and quantity of local television news about children and its role in shaping the public's views on the important challenges facing America's children and families.

Where Adults Get Their News



Source: Center for Media & Public Affairs, 1997

[1] *Price, Vincent and Roberts, Donald. "Public Opinion Processes." The Handbook of Communication Science, 1987.*

Children in the News: Frequency and Story Style

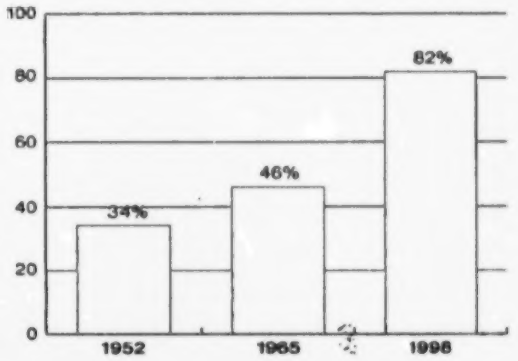
- **Children received scant attention in local news stories.** While children constitute approximately 26% of the U.S. population, children and child-related topics accounted for only 10% of all news stories. Only one in six local evening newscasts led with a story about children.

Local Television News Coverage of Children	
Total Number of Broadcasts	665
Total News Stories	11,671
Total Children's News Stories	1,168
Children's Stories Per Broadcast	2.1
Total Lead Stories about Children	122

A Clearer Picture of Youth

An enduring feature of modern American society is generational conflict. As part of a process to reach maturity and independence, successive generations of youth have explored, tested and pushed established boundaries cultivated and maintained by successive generations of adults who, in turn, have scrutinized youth with a sense of concern, bewilderment and outright skepticism. Some would argue that this process, in the end, has produced some of the brightest points in our history such as the jazz age, civil rights, feminism and the Internet revolution. However, evidence suggests that the intensity and nature of adult scrutiny has changed in recent years and given rise to far reaching trends negatively affecting the well-being of children and our society. In a comprehensive review of public opinion, Margaret Bostrom showed data indicating that adults today believe young people are more selfish, materialistic and reckless than youth were twenty years prior. She further found that adults' ratings of groups with whom they "share moral and ethical values" places young people only above welfare recipients, homosexuals and rich people (Bostrom, 2000). This view not only seems pervasive but out of line with reality in light of the fact that youth's positive attitudes regarding marriage, family, work and community service have been stable or increasing over the last fifteen years (Urban Institute, 2000).

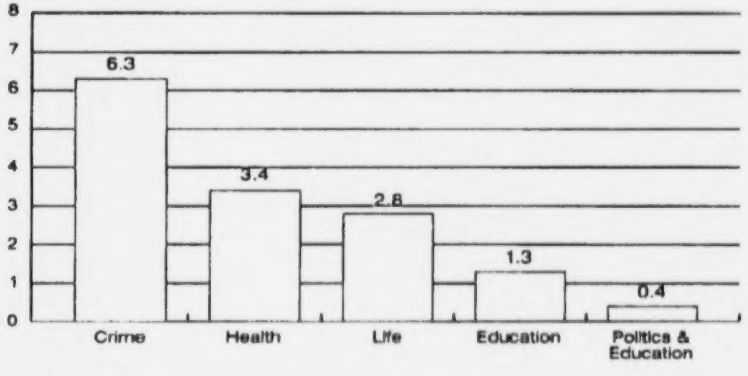
Adults Who Believe Youth "Don't Have a Sense of Right and Wrong."



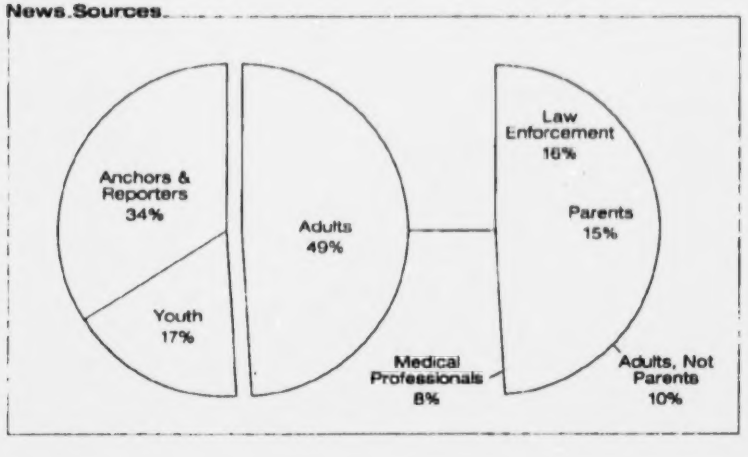
Source: Bostrom, M., FrameWorks Institute, 2000

: 10

A Typical Week of Children in the News
(Average number of stories per week.)



News Sources



Typical Week of News Programming about Children

- **In a typical week, viewers watched more than six crime stories, about three and one-half health stories, three lifestyle stories and one education story about children.** On average, viewers see about twice as many crime stories about children as health or lifestyle stories.

Who Talks?

- **Adults spoke in half of stories about children (49%); children spoke in less than one out of five stories (17%).** The four most frequent adult sources included law enforcement officials, parents, medical professionals and other non-parent adults.

12

13

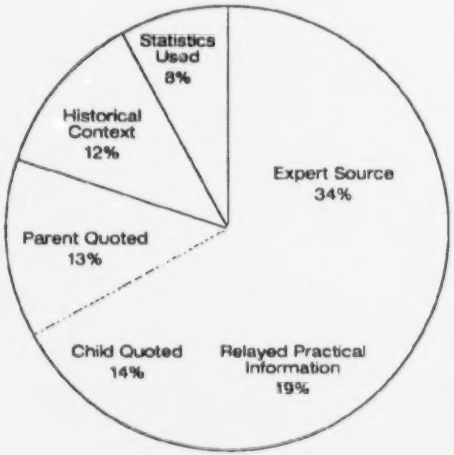
What Are They Saying?

- **Almost one in five stories relayed practical information designed to inform parents.** Stories included how to protect children from danger (i.e., diseases or getting lost), or informed parents about community events or trends that have direct implications for children (teacher shortages, bike safety products).
- **More than one in three children's stories (34%) relied upon experts' opinions to provide context for stories about children.** Statistical (8%) or historical (12%) elements were the least common elements utilized to create or enhance context in news stories about children.

News Presentation and Format

- **Four fifths of the children's stories (81%) made no connection between discrete events (e.g. criminal incidents) and broader trends or themes (e.g. U.S. poverty rates or after school programs).** This type of coverage, called episodic framing, can lead to perceptions where individuals are perceived to be the cause of the problem, instead of placing public issues in a broader context.
- **Children of color were significantly less likely to have stories told by people of their own racial or ethnic group.** Lead anchors were more likely to be male and disproportionately more likely to be white. There were more women and people of color in the less prominent roles of second anchor and field reporter.

Providing Context for News about Children

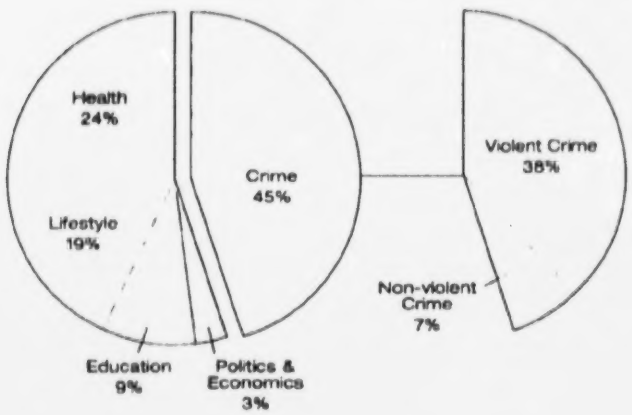


"The majority of Americans who get their information on which to base decisions—whether it's voting decisions or what policies to support or what to be afraid of in the world—get that information from the news...When the news limits the information that people get, that leads to distortion."

□ Lori Dorfman, Berkeley Media Studies Group
Co-author of *Off-Balance: Youth, Race and Crime in the News*
Los Angeles Times, "Coverage of Crime Promotes Fear",
April 10, 2001

Children in the News: **Content**

Content of News about Children



According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, by 1998, the violent juvenile crime offender rate had dropped by over half from a high in 1993 to the lowest level recorded since the national victimization survey began in 1973. Moreover, the violent crime victimization rate for youth—assaults, rapes, robberies and killings of youth—declined by half since 1994. Despite this downward trend, a Census Bureau 2000 poll found that nearly two thirds of the respondents said they believed juvenile crime was on the rise. What factors contribute to the public's perception of increased juvenile crime? Does the news media's coverage play a role? In this study, Children Now found that crime emerged as the dominant theme in the local broadcast news' coverage of children.

The Imperiled Child

Over the last several years, research on the local news has identified two major ways in which youth are framed. Youth often have been portrayed as problems to be reckoned with or as super predators who commit violent crimes. Our research identifies a new emerging frame, "the imperiled child." Although it is similar to the "problem child" and the "super predator" framing of youth, there are two notable differences in the "imperiled child" frame. Primarily, the world is a dangerous place and children are endangered not only by each other, but also by the broader environment and adults. Secondly, adults need better ways to protect children. To the degree local news carries something other than crime and violence, consumer safety stories and other practical information designed to help parents keep children safe are common. Taken together, they paint a portrait of children in grave danger and in need of protection.

This "imperiled child" frame was most evident in crime stories, the topic area in which children received the most news attention. More than two thirds of crime stories about children depicted children as victims (70%) while only a small number focused on children as perpetrators of crime (11%). Regardless of race, the majority of white, African American and Latino children were depicted as victims (74%, 69% and 68% respectively). However, white females were almost

Crime, Violence and Victimization

- **Almost half of all local news stories about children focused on crime.** When children were covered by the local news media, crime was the primary story topic accounting for 45% of stories about children.
- **When children were portrayed in crime news, it was usually in the context of violent activities.** More than eight out of every ten crime stories focusing on children (84%) were related to violent crime, with murder accounting for nearly half (45%) of all violent crime stories.
- **Children in the news were most likely to be depicted as victims rather than perpetrators of crime.** Over two thirds of crime stories (69%) featured children as victims. Only thirteen percent of stories featured children as perpetrators of crime and an additional thirteen percent portrayed children as both perpetrators and victims.

"Youth and violence have been connected on local television news. They have come together to be almost the same thing, which is the most serious problem for the people who have the least actual contact with young people."

□ Dr. Frank Gilliam, Professor of Political Science, UCLA
Children Now's 5th Annual Children and the Media Conference

"Watching all those violent scenes on the news makes me think, 'Oh my god, I'm going to be the next victim.'"

□ Nina Ryu, Age 16

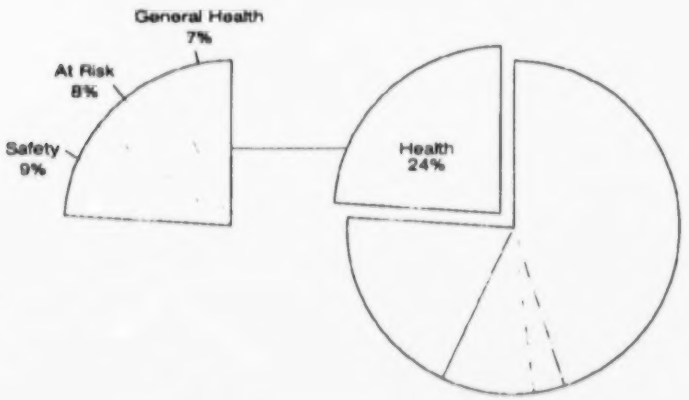
exclusively portrayed as victims (95%) and white males were most likely characterized as "both" victims and perpetrators (21%). Further, African American males were twice as likely as white males to be featured as a perpetrator (27% vs. 14%). Thus, the imperiled child news frame raises the specter of a racial coding system in crime coverage. In this manifestation, white children are most likely to be portrayed as victims in imminent danger and in need of protection, while African American males are more likely to be depicted as perpetrators than any other group.

The dominance of the "imperiled child" news frame has two clear implications. Primarily, the frequency of the frame means that other stories are squeezed off the youth news agenda. Secondly, the potency of the frame directs the public to think about issues through the lens of threats to children and ways to mitigate these threats in their environment. As a result, the frame does not allow for an examination of underlying social policy issues where the greatest protections, for the child as well as the community at large, are found in supporting families, strengthening communities and child-focused institutions, and providing children with positive and healthy opportunities for development.

18

19

A Child's Health in the News



Health

- **Health news was the second most frequent topic in the sample of stories, accounting for one fourth of all stories about children (24%).** Health news fell into three major categories: general health, safety and at-risk behavior. Safety stories primarily encompassed consumer issues such as the reliability of baby carriers and car seats. At-risk stories focused on accidents, alcohol and drug abuse and individual health problems. Nearly three quarters of health news coverage (72%) was devoted to stories depicting safety or at-risk situations *(see sidebar below)*. The general health category focused on stories about health policy, child development, vaccines, health programs and other informational story lines.
- **Only 10 stories out of a total of 233 health stories (4%) covered issues such as childhood development or health policy.** Almost all of children's health issues were presented in terms of immediate threats and protections.

Health and the Imperiled Child

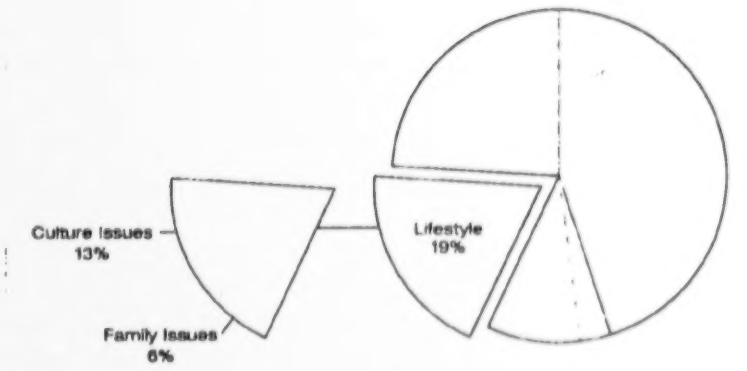
While important practical information for parents can be found throughout all health stories about children, most health news coverage portrayed children as in danger or at risk. Almost three fourths of health news about youth (72%) reinforce the "imperiled child" frame wherein children are portrayed as in imminent risk and needing to be protected from themselves and the environment. By focusing predominately on the "imperiled child" frame, other important health stories about developmental issues and policy having great implications for the long-term health and well-being of children are squeezed out of the picture. Further, the potency of this frame tells viewers to think about children's health issues simply in terms of immediate threats and protections. *(For more on the "imperiled child frame" see Sidebar: The Imperiled Child, p. 6)*

Through the "imperiled child" frame, children are portrayed as engaging in at-risk behavior (33%) or as the focus of safety issues and accidents (39%). At-risk stories tended to focus on attitudes and behaviors of youth, featuring issues or situations that could be controlled, mitigated or prevented through information, community awareness and initiatives. Safety stories, focusing on negligence and liability, appeared as random, ever-present and nearly unpreventable hazards that required inquiry, control and enforcement of protections by governing agencies and other entities. What was often not elicited from these stories was the underlying developmental, social or economic reasons for at-risk youth behavior or, in the case of safety stories, the ongoing conditions which give rise to hazards in the environments of youth.

Lifestyle: Culture and Family

- **About one out of every five children's stories (19%) focused on lifestyle issues.** Two thirds of these stories dealt with culture and community; one in three brought attention to family issues. Cultural stories focused on social groups, dating/relationships, community service and popular music/arts. Family stories included topics such as adoption/foster care, child custody, child-rearing practices, childbirth and children's legal rights. Overall, in lifestyle stories, children were seen as active members of the community and as having important roles in the family. Examples included coverage of a start-up program to provide former gang members with jobs and a story urging parents to involve children in daily household chores.

A Child's Life in the News



Implications of the Imperiled Child Culture

The Local Television News Media's Picture of Children found that children were most likely to be depicted as victims of crime in local news. The study also found that white females were more likely to be portrayed as victims of crime while African American males were more likely to be depicted as perpetrators than any other group.

While the "black perpetrator" rate may in fact outpace that of any other racial group, it is equally true that this rate is inextricably connected to an extremely high rate of victimization within the African American community. For example, "black on black crime" accounts for 93% of the black victim murder rate. Further, the number of young African American males killed by guns is five times higher than gun deaths of Latino males and ten times higher than gun deaths of white males. These facts need to be more widely acknowledged and reported by the news media, and accompanied by an analysis of underlying political, economic and social policies. Such multi-faceted coverage could educate and inform the public and policymakers.

"The surplus sighting and citing of young black bodies —in crime stories on the news, in congressional hearings about demeaning imagery in pop music, in shopping malls where they hang out, in police profiles where they are stigmatized, in suburban communities where they are surveiled—has draped paranoia and panic around their very limbs. In all the wrong ways, black youth are over-exposed. (Is it any wonder, then, that they dress in over-size clothing to hide their demonized bodies, to diminish the measuring of their alleged menace?)"

□ Dr. Michael Eric Dyson
To the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate, September 2000

Education

"...*In the news media, children are the invisible Americans, unseen and unheard.*"

□ William Woo, Former Peabody Award and Pulitzer Prize Judge
Child Beat '98

- **Less than one out of ten stories about children (9%) focused on education.** During a time when education has been a top priority for the public and policy makers, and despite the fact that education is predominantly a local issue, local television news gives little time to education in general, and even less to learning. A breakdown of education stories yielded three areas: administration, cognitive development and punishment.

The Kid Stays in the Picture

How can the news media best attend to the needs and concerns of children now and in the future?

- **Explore the boundaries of all stories and it is likely that you will find a child there.** Among the many dimensions of a story there will often be one that has implications for youth. Simply illuminating this fact or circumstance is a positive step towards improving the picture for youth.
- **Increase awareness on the part of the decision makers and community at large of the myriad of issues that affect children's lives.** Call their attention to the issues and initiatives that generate both positive and negative outcomes. Summon their participation in a dialogue that seeks to distill what is most important and best for youth.
- **Consult and listen to the local community to determine what they believe is relevant in regard to youth, the youth news agenda and youth policy.** Hold ascertainment meetings with a broad range of local organizations to learn about the pertinent issues facing youth in your community. Seek to understand the diversity of your community and inform the public without bias or stereotype.[1]

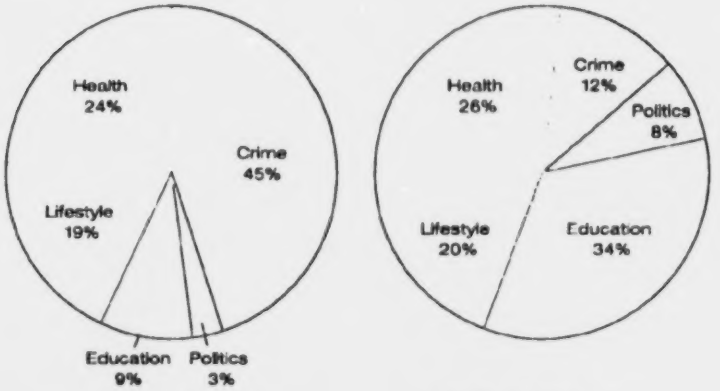
Communities are empowered by the dissemination of information that will improve their quality of life. Information, both good news and bad news, contributes to a shared knowledge base, which ultimately helps youth, families, decision makers and the general public to engage in solutions for the community

[1] 2000 Radio Television News Directors' Association Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Public Policy and Child Development

- **Few stories about children addressed public policy issues.** Only 13% of all news about children were concerned with public policy issues or systemic factors such as the role of governmental bodies at the local, state or federal level. Crime, most often the dominant story line on local newscasts, was rarely discussed from a public policy perspective. When public policy issues were covered, the news took a decidedly different turn: education (34%), health (26%) and lifestyle (20%) became the most prominent subject areas.
- **Fewer than 10 children's stories, less than one percent of our sample (.9%), focused on issues such as poverty, welfare and employment.** This is particularly striking given that one out of six children in the United States live in poverty, and that poverty is the single strongest predictor of poor outcomes for children.
- **Child development topics, including race, gender and age-related developmental concerns, received very little news coverage.** These topics accounted for only five percent of stories about children, with age-related developmental concerns at 3%, race/ethnicity issues at 2% and gender-based issues at .2%.

Overall Coverage vs. Public Policy Coverage

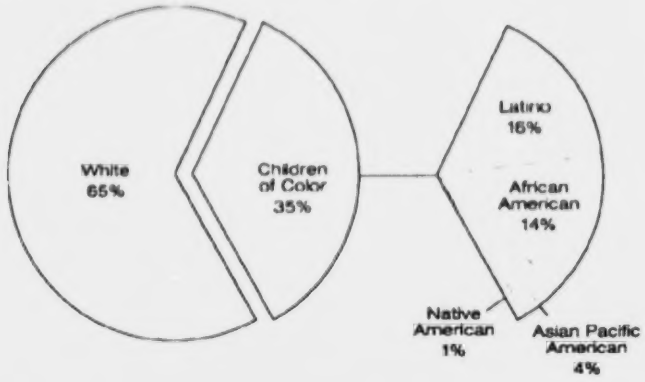


"I live in the Crenshaw area and on the news there's always something going on. But the neighborhood is not that bad...The news doesn't go to the schools in the area and see if the students are going to college or if the students are doing something with their lives."

□ Alida Rhymes, Age 18

Children in the News: **Convergence of Race and Ethnicity**

U.S. Demographics — Diversity of All Children



Source: U.S. Census 2000

Whether reporting events of national or local significance, the news is American adults' window to the world. Given rapidly changing racial and ethnic demographics, how well do the local news media cover children of color and their concerns? What messages about youth of color do most Americans get from watching local broadcast news?

Through the Eyes of a Child

In Children Now's 1998 national poll, *A Different World*, youth reported seeing all races doing "both" good and bad things in the news. However, across all races, children agreed that the news media tended to portray African Americans and Latinos more negatively than whites and Asian Pacific Americans. Further, a solid third or more of every race believed that Latinos and African Americans were mostly portrayed doing "bad things like crime or drugs or some other problem."

When looking at news portrayals of teenagers of different races, feelings became even stronger. Children were even more likely to see white and Asian Pacific American teenagers portrayed most positively and African American and Latino teenagers portrayed most negatively. When asked whether news about teenagers is fair, a young white girl responded, *"Well, I don't think so because the news makes it seem like most Hispanics are bad. And most blacks are bad because*

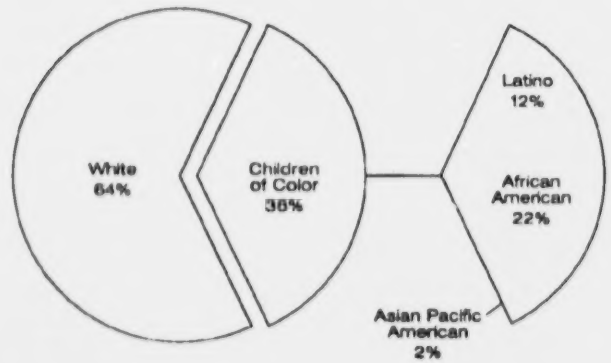
- **Children of color accounted for about one third of news stories about children (36%).** African American children accounted for over half of the news stories involving children of color. Latino children accounted for almost one third of those stories. Asian Pacific American children were hardly seen on local news and Native American children were invisible.[1]

[1]*Asian Pacific American youth were demographically significant in four of the six markets we examined. Their under-representation in the news mix is not, therefore, a function of the particular media markets studied.*

"When we look at how the media treats children, we have literally made them into a horror movie...made them into criminals, violent people, gangsters. And I think this can especially be said about minority children."

Juan Williams, Journalist
Children Now's 5th Annual Children and the Media Conference

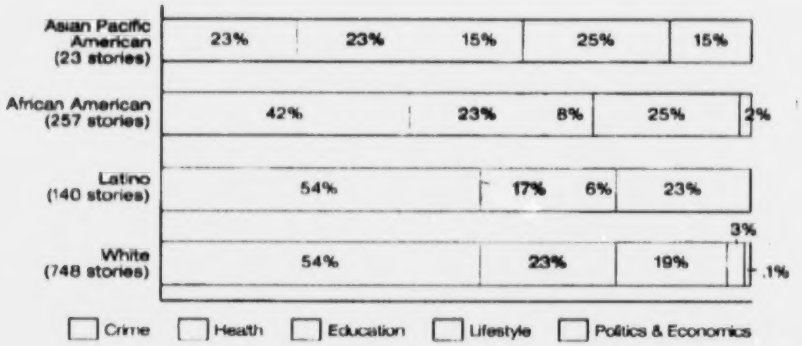
Race & Ethnicity of Children in the News



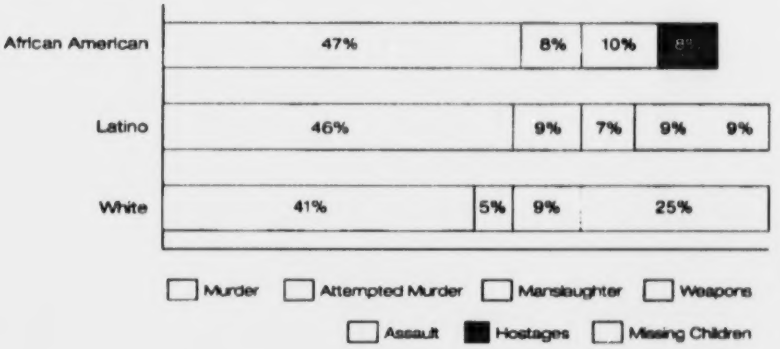
that's what's the news is—about their robberies. They don't have a lot of bad stuff about whites, so I don't know. It doesn't seem fair."

The observations of these youth mirrored some of the most salient findings from ***The Local Television News Media's Picture of Children.*** According to the study, African American and Latino youth were more likely than other children to be in stories with explicit violence, including murder and attempted murder. Further, young African American males were more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime and violence than any other group. Children Now research indicates almost 40 percent of children report watching television news almost daily or several times a week. What kinds of messages do children, especially children of color, receive about themselves when they see themselves consistently portrayed negatively in local news night after night? What kind of impact could such portrayals have on their self-esteem, as well as their ability to interact with people different from themselves? Over 80% of children of every race believe that media can teach children "that people of their race are important." As America's primary source of public affairs information, the broadcast news media not only plays a role in influencing adults' opinions of young people and shaping public discourse, but in providing messages and images that contribute to a young person's self perception and world view as well.

Race, Ethnicity and Youth in the News



Top Crime Stories by Race & Ethnicity



- **While crime was the dominant story line in news stories about children regardless of race, there were some significant differences in the content of news stories with regard to race and ethnicity.** White and Latino youth were somewhat more likely to be seen in crime stories than African Americans. Asian Pacific American youth were the least likely of any ethnic group to be seen in stories about crime. While Asian Pacific American children were more likely to be seen in stories having a political or economic focus, Latino children did not receive any such coverage.

- **African American and Latino children were somewhat more likely than other children to be placed in the context of explicit violence.** Almost two thirds of the stories involving Latino youth (62%) were about murder or attempted murder. One fourth of the stories involving African American and Latino youth focused on crimes involving weapons, assault and the taking of hostages, twice the proportion of stories about white youth in similar contexts. African American and Latino children were most likely to be the subject of murder stories while white children were the focus of stories about missing children. Further analysis revealed that white females were most likely to be depicted as victims while African American males were more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime and violence than any other group.

Conclusion

The news media have become the American public's primary window to the world of public affairs. Local broadcast television news has surpassed both the national network broadcasts and newspapers as the primary news source for most Americans, with 88 percent watching regularly. Yet, local news stories about children and children's issues rarely include broader issues of politics and public policy. Coupled with local broadcast news media's focus on youth crime, issues deserving attention and directly impacting the majority of children's quality of life—education, health, community, family and economics—are pushed to the periphery.

Moreover, coverage that focuses on crime to the exclusion of other important issues can also have a profound effect on youth themselves. Children Now's previous research has found that the news media's negative portrayals of children, particularly children of color, send strong messages to children about their identity, their community and their place in the world. ***The Local Television News Media's Picture of Children*** underscores the need for greater breadth and balance in the news media's coverage of children and child-related issues in order to provide a better and more realistic understanding of issues affecting them. Such broader and improved coverage could help educate policymakers, community members and the public to make sound and informed decisions for the well-being of our nation's children.

In the Mix?

Local news broadcasts increasingly face a conflict between efficiency and quality. In developing an approach to community coverage, can children and children's issues be heard in the mix? What are the ingredients central to producing breadth and balance in coverage concerning children? Serving the San Francisco Bay Area—the nation's fifth largest media market—KTVU-TV, a FOX-affiliated station in Oakland, received the highest score ever from the Project for Excellence in Journalism for its nightly "Ten O'Clock News." News director Andrew Finlayson spoke about how quality coverage is often "the product of extra effort and time that otherwise can't be accounted for."

ON...

– Mission: *For many years KTVU has held fast to one ideal: to serve all of the communities of the Bay Area all of the time. That often means looking for communities that are not often reported on and hearing their voices. The diversity of our newsroom is a huge asset. By representing the geographic, economic and political diversity of the community, [reporters can better listen] to the community and start to see where the problems are.*

– Children: *Unfortunately children often lose out because children don't tend to hold press conferences. News is generally being reduced to what is easy to cover rather than what is important. In a world with 24-hour media, internet and cable channels, issues involving children locally are among the most important because they are local issues. Many of the people in our newsroom speak up on behalf of children—some of them are parents, others are just concerned reporters.*

– Source Diversity: *We are very conscious of trying to reach out to different types of spokespersons. It's good journalism but it's also good business because when people see themselves in a newscast they can relate to it. The long-term success of the newscast is based on people building a relationship with it and meaningful stories are the best way to build that relationship.*

– Success: *Ratings are of course a never-ending key factor because they're used by everybody else to evaluate our success. But within the newsroom there has to be a spirit of doing what is important, not only what is interesting. I think newsrooms can make their own decisions as to whether or not they are successful in speaking to their communities by the kind of response they get, in emails and phone calls.*

□ Andrew Finlayson, News Director, KTVU-TV

Methodology

This study examines the local hour-long evening newscasts preceding the national news in six American cities—Atlanta, Boston, Des Moines, Los Angeles, New York and Seattle—for the CBS, NBC and ABC affiliates during July 1 to July 31, 2000. Cities were chosen to maximize geographic location, market size and racial/ethnic composition. While some cities had hour-long newscasts (e.g., Boston and Seattle), others had two thirty-minute newscasts. Additionally, sporting events and other special programming interrupted some newscasts. In sum, this procedure yielded videotapes covering up to eighteen hours of local news each day across six cities and eighteen stations during the month of July 2000.

Local news stories coded for this study had a primary focus on children or child-related topics. Children were defined as those people between birth and eighteen years of age, and child-related topics were those that had direct relevance for children. Each story was categorized in one of the following topic areas: crime/violence, health, education, lifestyle and politics/economics. Within each category, stories were given more detailed sub-codes. Coders were instructed to provide a brief written account of each story. Stories were also coded if they contained one of the following four broad themes: public policy issues or developmental, racial/ethnic and gender differences. To the extent that the race/ethnicity, age and gender of each child could be determined, it was recorded.

This study was conducted by Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., Ph.D., UCLA professor and director of the Center for Communications and Community. Dr. Gilliam trained all coders through a three-hour introductory training session, a coding exercise and review session where issues of judgment, content and reliability were discussed. Inter-coder reliability was tested regularly and assessed at 86%.

Note: Percentages in charts and graphs may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Children Now Board of Directors

[illegible]

Credits

[illegible]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[illegible]

Children Now Offices

Oakland
1212 Broadway, 5th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel (510) 763-2444
Fax (510) 763-1974
children@childrennow.org

Los Angeles
2001 South Barrington Ave., Suite 100
Los Angeles, CA 90025
Tel (310) 268-2444
Fax (310) 268-1994

www.childrennow.org